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## How are English language teachers supported to develop professional knowledge and practice, within their schools? Qualitative Study

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# **How are English Language Teachers supported to develop professional knowledge and practice, within their schools?**

QS Study 2017

Authors

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# How are English Language Teachers supported to develop professional knowledge and practice, within their schools?

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experiences of support in the setting of their schools?

## Introduction

This was a small-scale, qualitative study into the experiences of '*support in school for improving knowledge and practice of ELT*' amongst teachers participating in a large-scale, quantitative, quasi-experimental (QE) study (EIA, 2017). The purpose of the study was to identify the nature of '*support in school*' for the introduction of improved classroom practices, as experienced by teachers.

The study sought to explore aspects deliberately incorporated in the EIA School-Based Teacher Development (SBTD) programme (the *treatment* in the QE study) but which could also occur through other mechanisms (in *control* schools) such as:

- Teachers purposefully introducing communicative language teaching activities that were previously unfamiliar to themselves or their students.
- Teachers individually or collaboratively studying, planning, practicing or reflecting upon activities to improve their own English language proficiency, or that of their students
- The attitudes and actions of those in positions of authority in schools, such as head teachers and education officers.

The study addressed the following research questions:

1. In the setting of the school<sup>1</sup>, how are English Language Teachers supported to develop their subject or pedagogic knowledge and their classroom practice?
2. How do contextual factors affect English Language Teachers'

3. Are there identifiable relationships between English Language Teachers' qualitative experiences of support in the setting of their schools, and the findings of quantitative studies of classroom practices or student learning outcomes?

## Methodology

The study took a critical realist position (Pawson, 2013) recognising the complex interplay of agency and structure at each level of education systems; the study sought to acknowledge the ways individuals make meaning of their experiences and how the broader social context impinges on those meanings.

The main research method was semi-structured interviews with teachers, informed by prior observation of their classroom practice. Semi-structured interviews were also carried out with head-teachers and education officers. Contextual information was gathered via questionnaire.

Eight schools, head teachers and education officers participated in the study, with sixteen English Language Teachers, distributed across conditions as shown in the table below.

	<i>School performance in QE study</i>	
	<i>High Scoring</i>	<i>Low Scoring</i>
<i>QE Control</i>	1 primary 1 secondary	1 primary 1 secondary
<i>QE Treatment</i>	1 primary; 1 secondary	1 primary; 1 secondary

<sup>1</sup> i.e. not at training courses or professional development events out-of-school

There were two rounds of fieldwork (October 2015 and October 2016) during the study. A thematic approach was taken to data analysis (Braun and Clarke, 2006).

## Findings

The summary findings are presented for each school, below.

### School 1: Primary Control: High Pre-test

There was evidence of teachers collaborating together to overcome problems they faced in the classroom, through regular informal support

*'We sit in tiffin hour and discuss about our challenges and also possible solutions'.*

Teachers also reported a perception of changes in their practice *'Before I just lectured in class and didn't care much about students' learning. ...Now I teach by the way in which students can acquire more' ...When I write on the board, and ask questions, they show interest', '...if they are with friends they became more attentive'.*

Teachers ascribe changes in practice to prior training programmes. They said that after attending training workshops they discussed new practices and tried to implement them at school: *'At first we apply. After applying we see the result. Children learnt more successfully than last time. So, I suggest them (colleagues) to apply this technique. Then they follow me...'*. Teachers were able to articulate the purpose behind what they did in class, and appeared to be in control of their class.

One teacher directly attributed changes in her own teaching practice to things that were happening in her daughter's school, where *'they follow EIA techniques'*. The teacher said her daughter told her what was happening in her school and the teacher adopted many of those techniques in her own teaching<sup>2</sup>. Her professional growth over the year was

apparent and one could see many professional learning strategies being employed.

Both teachers demonstrated a nuanced understanding of their classrooms, their students, and learning. It was clear that a collaborative and collegial environment existed and teachers had a lot of trust in the Head Teacher and her abilities.

The teachers sounded professional; there were sometimes long silences when they were asked questions: they thought and then came up with considered answers. They seemed to have become more reflective over the year of the study.

During the year of the study, one teacher was away completing a professional qualification (Dip.Ed.), so other teachers had to teach continuously without any break. As a result, there was limited opportunity for lesson observation either by peers or the HT.

The head teacher (HT) promoted a collaborative environment: she was of the view that *'teachers need to work together'*. She was aware of communicative approaches to English language teaching and said she wanted teachers to learn *'how to teach students English, using English conversation'*. She also had some practical ideas of how they could do this...*'There are commands in the present textbook which they can use'*.

The Education Officer (EO) felt strongly that improvements in English Language Teaching were much better supported in EIA (treatment) schools and said he promoted EIA (treatment) practices to non-EIA (control) schools, including this one. This may have been in-part why the head teacher was aware of communicative approaches to English language teaching. Whilst the EIA treatment was provided to 63 schools in the Upazila, the EO said they were actively promoting aspects of the treatment across all 149 schools<sup>3</sup>.

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<sup>2</sup> In terms of the QE study (EIA 2017), this informal mode of awareness raising represents a source of contamination between control and treatment schools.

<sup>3</sup> Again, in terms of the QE study, such EO activity represents another mechanism of contamination between control and treatment schools.

### School 2: Primary Control: Low Pre-test

There was some evidence of teachers collaborating together to improve their classroom practice, but this was mixed.

There was a formal mechanism/structure for collaboration through 'Teacher Support Network' (TSN, an adaptation of Japanese Lesson Study) which was being promoted by central and local education officials. Teachers reported meeting regularly in-school, to follow the prescribed "lesson study processes" and they were positive about this experience. There was some evidence of regular peer-observation of lessons occurring through TSN and of shared lesson preparation or planning: *'...on Thursday, after our school hour, sometimes according to TSN, Teachers' Support Network, we observe one teacher's class. Before our classes, we all tried to support her and so she can give most output in the classes. And thus, she also can give showing her most output in the classes. For this we try sometimes'*. There was also reporting of oral or written feedback following lesson observations: *'yes yes, evaluation, at last I take evaluation like orally and writing.'*

Following the appointment of a new teacher to fill a long-standing vacancy, one of the teachers was able attend the Upazila-level Subject-Based Training (SBT) for English teachers<sup>4</sup> and other teachers reported that she had shared this learning with the rest of the staff: *'While she comes back, she shares with other teachers. And now we know the new things in the training, such other training, how we can teach in the classes and such things. While she is absent, we have to take her class. And so, we share with her and try.'* However, the two teachers in this study were vague about the specific nature of learning which this person had shared with them and did not identify any specific changes in their practice.

Teachers did identify two changes in their English language teaching, but it was unclear whether they attributed these to TSN, SBT or

other professional development activities. Firstly, they said they were now more focussed upon getting learners to practice using the target language in lessons: *T1: 'I have given enough time to practice our students. In the classroom, in pair, in group, individually'*. Secondly, they reported a greater focus more on preparing adequately for the lessons (though the HT still noted that high teaching loads meant staff often lacked time for adequate preparation).

The HT appears to promote a focus on teaching and learning, including promoting regular teachers' self-evaluation and shared lesson planning: [teacher]: *'Our head madam is very helpful. She got many trainings so she advised to follow the best method and tell me, not this way and try to follow this way'*.

The EO was reported to visit school regularly and observe lessons and was also instrumental in the adoption of collaborative practices associated with TSN.

### School 3: Primary Treatment: High Pre-test

There was strong evidence of a climate of professional sharing and learning within the school, that appeared to be enabled by the HT. Teachers report that when they attend any training, they come back and discuss it with their HT and then apply the techniques in class. They also get support from teachers in other schools during cluster meetings. With different kinds of training, especially the year-long PTI training, teachers reported becoming more attentive towards students' understanding and learning, saying that earlier they didn't care whether students understood or not. As a result, students were reported to be more enthusiastic to come to school and also have developed better relationships with teachers.

Teachers reported that after returning from each EIA workshop (treatment) they *'sit with others'* and shared what they had learned. They said that the project resources (print materials

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<sup>4</sup> Again, in terms of the QE study (EIA 2017), the exposure of teachers to SBT represents a source of contamination, as the EIA treatment has been

partially integrated into SBT. Sampling design sought to minimise this source of contamination, but clearly this was not entirely eliminated.

and audio-visual materials) supported this process: *'In our school I share the materials with other teachers along with English teacher'*. Specifically, the teachers reported regularly watching the EIA professional development videos and using the *English Language 4 Teachers* (EL4T) audio course together. Teachers said they especially liked the audio and video materials from EIA; she says, *'when we play audio ... they (students) seem very interested to the lesson'*.

Both teachers attributed positive changes in their teaching style to collaboration in school with: *'all the teachers; especially the HT used to observe the classes and it was helpful. Besides, I discussed with my partner about the class and thus I have improved'*. She said she also helps other teachers with some 'new techniques': *'For example I talked about "Games" with another teacher who wanted to know when the games should be applied in the class'*. She uses it when *'students become inattentive in class'*.

Teachers perceived many changes in their practice. One teacher said that previously she only read from the book and students only listened and *'did not respond'*. When the teacher told them something, *'they only wrote in their copies'*. But now she tries to read from the book and tries to make the students understand using different materials. *'Now students are learning something and when she shows something in class students can tell the names of those things in English'*. Also, teachers said they use the target language more, but code-switch when necessary: *'I mostly speak in English but when the students cannot understand anything, I make them understand in Bangla and again tell the same thing in English'*.

Teachers appeared at ease with communicative activities and materials in their practice. They were observed to use: posters, games, open questions, inviting students to come to the board and so forth; and students appeared at home doing these activities.

The HT appeared to be a core promoter/enabler of the collaborative environment within the school. The HT was

reported to observe teachers' classes once every two weeks and discusses it for half an hour after school. The HT appeared to closely monitor many aspects of teachers' practice.

The EO thought the EIA (treatment) was more effective than other government run programmes: *'It's a very successful program. Teachers are highly motivated and implement English in Action EIA'*. He thought one crucial difference was in the audio-visual materials provided on phone and said he firmly believes that *'if materials are used appropriately, the classroom practices will be effective. Children like the classes in which different types of materials are used'*. The EO also thought peer support in school and follow-on workshops were other critical elements: *'if they face any problem, they discuss with themselves. Non-EIA teachers don't get the opportunity for discussion. EIA teachers get training after three months. After EIA training, the teachers are more serious about making a lesson plan and follow it'*.

The EO said they liked the EIA approach (treatment) and try to convey that to other non-EIA (control) schools in their Upazila, whenever they have an opportunity.

#### School 4: Primary Treatment: Low Pre-test

There was strong evidence of professional development activity taking place within the school, throughout the duration of the study. Peer support practices appeared to be commonplace, with teachers reporting shared lesson preparation, regular and frequent peer-observation (2-3 times per week) and informal post-lesson discussion, making for a very supportive climate. '

The HT reported teachers working together regularly and using the TPD materials supplied by the (treatment) programme: in particular, watching the classroom practice videos and discussing these together during breaks. Teachers were positive about the opportunities to learn through the videos and mentioned working on them individually at home: *'I do some regular homework at home. I become free 11:00 pm every day and then I listen to the SD card. And I study the TG at every morning'*. She

also thought the classroom audios supplied by the programme made an important contribution to the effectiveness of the English lessons. *'I think there are two reasons our class 1, 2, 3 being developed. First one is the speaker. Backbencher also can listen the audio. They focus to the speaker. They enjoy learning rhymes, action songs using speaker.'*

One of the treatment teachers had gone on maternity leave during the course of the study and had been replaced by someone who was not an English teaching specialist. The "temporary" English teacher appeared to be motivated by the opportunities for enjoyable learning offered by English, which she said was unlike her usual subject, mathematics: *'Math class is a hard class, but English class is, I think, enjoyable, we can make the class enjoyable, can interaction students and teachers, but math class not as usual that'*.

Both teachers said they implemented new classroom practices from the treatment: *'We follow EIA teaching method in class 6, 7, 8. I do follow. Yes, sometimes 2 or 3 classes in a week'*. One teacher gave specific examples of changes in their practice. Both teachers were observed to use techniques promoted in the EIA treatment in their teaching.

After beginning the EIA treatment, one teacher reported other teachers asking about apparently dramatic changes in her practice: *'After completing my first TDM, my colleagues always ask me that 'Bithi what have you done?'* They also said they tried to help other teachers make changes, including through peer-observation and co-teaching: *'For example, in my off period, sometimes I go and sit in a class to observe that class. Sometimes, I go to other class with a view to help that teacher also'*.

The original HT had been a strong promoter of collaborative professional development within the school, but had retired during the study. A long-standing staff member had taken over as acting HT; they appeared to be just as committed to ensuring the school's commitment to quality and ongoing improvement. Teachers reported having

lessons observed by the HT, typically twice a month.

The EO's reported observing significant positive changes in teachers practice over the course of the study: *'They practice it because of EIA. I will go to visit EIA school and observation English class; there I saw teacher always speak in English and students answer it. And they took it positively... Nearly 50% student can speak in English. English teacher speaks English 100%'*.

#### School 5 Secondary Control: High Pre-test

The teachers and head teachers painted a picture of a fairly collegial atmosphere among staff, but this appeared to be somewhat informal and mixed. Whilst the teachers talked about helping each other by making suggestions and discussing grammar points, they did not give any specific examples:

*'...When he faces problems all times she takes my suggestion... "how I solve this?" or "I cannot understand it, how it will be? You make easy."*

[researcher]: *'And what kind of problems did he ask, about English or about the class?'*

[teacher]: *'umm... especially in grammar.'*

Similarly, teachers said the HT was keen to discuss practice at staff meetings: *"Sometimes we have meeting and the head teacher is very eager for it for discussing problems with one another"*, but again they could not give any specific examples of issues discussed.

During lesson observations, teachers took steps to involve the learners: both lessons included elements of discussion and individual responses to the content. However, only one of the teachers used much English to conduct the lesson and neither allowed much speaking practice in English for students. This seemed to reflect a belief mentioned by both, that due to poor educational background the learners were not capable of using and understanding English to any great extent. The students might have been capable of listening and speaking considerably more in English if teachers had made greater use of scaffolding techniques, but in interview, only one teacher (who had used more English in class) showed any awareness of such techniques. This suggested that understanding of scaffolding



techniques had not been discussed or shared between teachers.

One teacher (who had used less English in lessons and seemed unaware of scaffolding techniques) had been regularly attending an in-service programme at the local university over the year. They were able to give examples of new practices learned from the programme that they had introduced and felt positive about: including use of pair and group work to manage large classes; peer and self-correction; techniques for engaging learners' interest and involvement. *'...I try to input my idea in my teaching. I am trying to improve myself, how I will manage a large class in the situation and with my limitation'*. The teacher illustrates changes in their practice with reference to getting students to look at each other's work in their notebooks: *"Or exchanging 'khata' [notebook].... Then I say, please exchange your khata. And now what you have written and what he has written - compare and find out your own self. And I only then suggest, I only give them instruction if they mistake'*. This teacher had historically been involved in CPD through projects (TQI, CPD 1). Over the duration of the study, there was no mention of any other ongoing CPD programme or structured approach to supporting changes in practice in school.

There was no mention of either peer observation or regular formal observations of classroom practice by HT or EO. Whilst the HT was reported to make regular and frequent rounds of all the classrooms, this appeared to be little more than looking in from the veranda. The HT said they found it challenging to use such observations as a basis for teacher development and felt teachers may not always have been willing to accept advice: *'If I tell them to teach differently, they mind a little. These are challenges. They are not always pleased'*. The EO's also appeared to make little use of lesson observation: [teacher]: *'And the Education officials, when they come, they go to the class, ask the students about something but they don't observe the class. They want to know about the teaching of the teachers from the students and thus inspect about their teaching*

*but they don't observe the teachers while teaching.'*

#### School 6: Secondary control; low pre-test

There was some evidence of formal (individual) lesson planning and shared review of plans or lessons by teachers, but there was little evidence of any further in-school support to help teachers improve their knowledge and practice in ELT. Teachers said they wrote their lesson plans ('Shida') before the class and sometimes share what happened in class with other teachers and reflect on their 'faults' and good things. [Teacher]: *'Previous lesson plan after finishing the class. Before lesson plan which fault, and which good, analysis to help teacher and another teacher'*. Teachers report doing this for all subjects, but it appears to be a formality rather than meaningful support to improved understanding or practice.

Although one teacher talked of pair and group work learned from NAEM and BRAC programmes and of an aspiration to *'ask questions in English, students will answer in English, and students will also solve the exercise other than the text book, in English'*, none of this was apparent in lesson observations. There seemed to be several issues and challenges preventing adoption of communicative approaches. Teachers said they had to prepare students to answer only a paper-pencil test, focusing mainly on grammar (60% is devoted to grammar in the question paper) and therefore they didn't use the textbook (English for Today). The teachers also didn't have the *Teachers' Guide* for the textbook (which provides lots of communicative activities and listening tests). Teachers said there was an assistant teacher who was the HT's *'right hand'*; this teacher used an exam book rather than the textbook and students scored high marks by memorizing answers to model questions, rather than learning [teacher]: *'They cramming, without understanding coming the examination, students only cram'*. Memorizing model answers for the exams was the most common practice.

There was also evidence of gendered teaching practice, with teachers paying more attention



to boys than girls (although approximately 60 % of students were girls). Teachers justified this in interview, saying: *'boys are smart'... 'most of the girls naturally are not interested'*. They attributed this in part to their culture, although they also expressed a contrary understanding that education meant girls participating equally.

Despite this, the HT was a well-qualified English teacher, with B.Ed. and M.Ed. degrees and a history of further INSET training through NAEM (14 days in Communicative Language Teaching -CLT) and BRAC (2 modules). In interview, they showed awareness of some aspects of good practice in ELT: *'As a English teacher, I have to try our students to take communicative English, four skills about listening, speaking, reading, writing'*. The HT claimed to regularly observe lessons and give feedback: *'I need to sit with my teachers. Then I will discuss about the latest teaching system... I need to motivate the teachers'*. However, the two teachers didn't corroborate this, saying the HT walked around the school and looked into classrooms briefly from outside, but did not properly observe lessons or provide feedback.

Similarly, teachers reported that although the Academic Supervisor (AS) visited the school, they *'...did not visit their classes; he doesn't give any support in teaching and learning'... 'This is real formality...only procedure'*. The AS seemed aware that cramming was common across the Upazila: *'..our school focus on exercise and exercise with writing. Without knowing the pronunciation students write the answers and pass... Our students are getting A+ but they can't do well in higher education'*.

The AS said they felt teachers ranked higher than them, so they were not *'able to control the teacher'*. They also said they had little influence as *'SMC are now the supreme power'* in the school. The AS said their local office was severely under-staffed and they were covering several different roles and duties: *'With the new education policy, new subjects, many books but without manpower implementation is challenging'*.

Although a control school during this study, the school were aware of the EIA treatment and eagerly anticipating participating in the programme the following year. EIA team's visit to the isolated location was met with a lot of hope [HT]: *'On behalf our school I can say that, it is our pleasure that English in Action included us. I expect that our teacher will learn from your EIA and students will be benefitted by the programme. As the teacher train the students perfectly in English. As our students communicate using English with others in the whole world'*.

### School 7: Secondary treatment; high pre-test

This very large secondary school was reportedly viewed as one of the highest-performing schools in the city and was highly regarded for the use of ICT and multi-media classrooms, of which there were three. The school had selective intake by entry exam intake and most students were from higher socio-economic status homes. In addition to the EIA (treatment) programme, teachers had taken part in a number of earlier CPD initiatives, all linked to ICT in education, including *ICT Content Development* (TQI II), *Connecting Classrooms* (British Council) and *Multi-Media Classrooms* (A2I).

During the initial fieldwork, it was only possible to interview one teacher. They reported making regular use of teacher development materials (from the treatment) in school, to help deepen their understanding and classroom practice: *'I have learned these things by watching the video clips from EIA. I have learnt many techniques. For example, how to improve the students' vocabulary, how to make them prepare for the listening activity, how to arrange for group work, pair work, how to organize storytelling, how to give feedback etc. I had some previous knowledge, but when I went through the videos, I got the clear ideas. But when I saw the videos and heard the instructions from the commentator, I could come to know that I should learn and do like this'*.

The teacher told how they had used the multi-media classroom to show all the other teachers

the professional development resources and how the digital resources had been copied and used by other teachers in the school: *'After I received EIA training, I arranged a training in the lab under the supervision of the head teacher. In that training all the teachers were present. I shared the knowledge and materials with the teachers, not only the English teachers but also with other subject teachers to make them know how we can make our class interactive with the students. All the teachers saw the videos and they were benefited. Besides, I shared all the materials from EIA with other English teacher both in morning and day shift and with other physics and chemistry teachers also who were interested to take those materials. They took the materials in their pen drive'.*

The teacher reported their experience of peer-support in school as a very important means of enabling them to improve their knowledge and practice: *'...the English teachers are not like other teachers. We are learning from each other. We never hesitate to ask anything to other teachers if we face any difficulty... I think sharing ideas is one of the main strategies to improve our teaching style'.* They also reported occasional peer-observation of lessons: *'Sometimes I observe her class and in another time, she observes my classes. So, we can develop ourselves... Not regularly, but we observe. After the training, I have observed 2 or 3 classes and she has also observed my 2 or 3 classes... I gave her some feedback like these things should be done or these works should be followed. She also gave me some suggestions... we don't have any specific time actually, but whenever we get time, we discuss about the problems and solutions'.*

During the later fieldwork, the second teacher confirmed ongoing peer-support with her 'project partner', despite the challenge of working on different shifts: *Yes, I get support and we help each other very much... We communicate with each other, though we are working in different shift, but we take help, I take help from him, if he wants to.... we share ideas but we cannot see each other's class very much because we are working in different shifts'.*

In lesson observations, both teachers were seen to use audio resources (treatment) appropriately to support active listening, at both the earlier and later observations. One teacher (who chose to teach in an 'ordinary' classroom on both occasions) seemed particularly proficient in communicative techniques, with warm-up games, scaffolding and a range of listening-related activities being used. Both teachers were observed to allow for personalized language use, through group-work or open-pair dialogue. One teacher (who chose to teach in the multi-media classroom on both occasions) prepared extensive digital materials themselves, in line with their prior training on *ICT content development* (TQI II), but these digital resources were seen to limit opportunities for active student participation or personalization of language use by students.

The HT positioned themselves as primarily an administrator, but also as a driver of high achievement, which they sought to achieve through the promoting the extensive use of ICT. They also rigorously monitored teachers' use of ICT and their completion of lesson plans. Despite all the HT's efforts to promote and monitor the general application of training to practice, and especially the development and use of ICT-related practices, neither the HT nor teachers referred to any regular, formal structures for enabling teacher co-learning or the co-development of practice.

The EO was new to the district and had not yet visited this particular school. When asked, what was the most important role of an EO, they replied: *'They [teachers] should emphasize on students rather than focusing too much on digital content.'* It's not clear whether this was a specific criticism of the emphasis on the role of digital technology and content in this particular school.

#### School 8: Secondary treatment: low pre-test

There was little evidence of support in-school to enable teachers to improve their classroom practice in this school, despite the teachers' participation in a school-based teacher

development (treatment) programme over the course of the study. This situation did not appear to improve over the duration of the study.

There was no evidence of teachers having met together or supported each other in working through the EIA (treatment) programme. Although teachers attached a lot of importance to English language proficiency, both for themselves and for their students, they seemed unaware of the *English Language for Teachers* audio course on their SD-cards, and little aware of other professional development materials there. One of the teachers' SD cards was no-longer functioning, but this was unknown to the other teacher or the HT.

Both teachers said they thought speaking was the most important skill and they hoped to improve that for themselves and in their students. However, in the observed lessons, teacher over-whelming used Bangla to the exclusion of English language and most students had little or no opportunity to speak, let-alone speak in English. Across observed lessons, student responses were typically limited to a few individual students who were invited to speak, but their response was most commonly to give almost mono-syllabic answers in Bangla.

A major problem seems to be that one teacher *only* teaches lessons for paper 2 (grammar), which they feel provides them limited opportunity to practice communicative language teaching. The other teacher teaches both papers and has more opportunity to develop communicative practices.

Both teachers said they did not observe each other's classes '*in an organized way*' but they casually '*look up*' to see what is going on, as their classes are next door to each other.

HT says he has set up a mechanism where there is a lot of dialogue among teachers: '*We sit with the teachers and ask them your opinion about today's class and what do you want to do in this regards? ...They think that, for the outsiders they should perform better. Basically,*

*teaching improves if you're monitoring continuous basis*'. But this is not corroborated by either teacher: '*Actually our head teacher remains busy with official works most of the time, please don't share with Sir that I am telling this. He is busy with official duty. He observes classes very rare. If he were conscious, we also could be more sincere... Actually, this is secret matter, but I have told you*'.

The HT appeared to be somewhat aloof or indifferent. He said he firmly believed that teachers should take responsibility for being good professionals: if they had issues or needed help, they should come to see him; but the teachers seemed unaware that any such channels of access or support might be open to them.

The EO had visited the school prior to the first fieldwork for this study and had observed lessons and even put on a demonstration lesson for teachers, but there was little evidence the EO had promoted ongoing activities support to professional development within the school. The EO said they were aware that implementation of the SBTD (treatment) programme in school was inadequate, but they were unable to help due to chronic understaffing of the education office.

## Conclusions

**RQ1.** There were marked differences between primary and secondary sectors.

In all four primary schools, there was evidence of ongoing, active support. For example:

- In school 1 (high-scoring control) both teachers and head-teacher regularly met together to review and discuss classroom practices. The head teacher showed an awareness of communicative approaches to ELT ('*how to teach students English, using English conversation*') and actively encouraged greater use of English language. The Education Officer also promoted more student talk in English, as well as encouraging teachers to regularly sit together and discuss their teaching.

- School 2 (low-scoring control) began practicing 'Teacher Support Network' (TSN, a form of *Japanese Lesson Study*) during the study. Teachers met to plan and review lessons which the head teacher observed, twice a month. Education Officers regularly visited school, observed lessons and promoted TSN activities.
- In school 3 (high-scoring treatment) the teacher had deliberately increased the use of spoken English over the year '*We think... they won't understand, but they understand*'. Twice a month, teachers met together at lunchtime, to watch professional development videos and plan teaching. The Head Teacher observed and reviewed lessons with teachers. The Education Officer was actively supportive.
- In school 4 (low-scoring treatment) there was a strong collaborative culture, promoted by the head teacher. Teachers regularly met to watch professional development videos '*at tiffin time*'. Some also studied these at home. One teacher referred daily to the teacher guide.

In three of the four secondary schools (both control schools and the low-performing treatment school) there was no indication of teachers' experiencing discernible support:

- School 5 (high-scoring control), no regular support was reported.
- School 6 (low-scoring control), the head teacher met with teachers but '*when they sit to discuss classes, it's just a formality*'. Classroom practice is described as '*cramming, without understanding...*'.
- In school 8 (low-scoring treatment), the head teacher says there is collaboration, but appeared dismissive. No regular support was reported by teachers.

Only in one secondary school (7, high-scoring treatment) were teachers discussing their teaching together, actively using professional development videos, audio resources and

posters. The head teacher was actively promoting these activities.

**RQ2.** The most significant contextual factor was the support of the head teacher (and education officer) in promoting shifts in classroom practice and in fostering professional collaboration and support. In three of the treatment schools (3,4 and 7) professional development resources designed to facilitate support in school were widely used, whilst the fourth school (8) demonstrates in absentia, the importance of school leadership to support this.

**RQ3.** Support in school does appear to be associated (tentatively) with higher scores in the QE study, whilst the absence of support appears associated with lower scores. In most higher-scoring schools (1, 3 and 7) there was evidence of a collaborative teacher development culture, promoted by strong school leadership; whilst there was only one high-scoring school (5), where this support appeared absent. Both low-scoring secondary schools (6 and 8) offered little discernible support. Whilst there was evidence of a collaborative teacher development culture being promoted by strong school leadership both low-scoring primary schools (2 and 4) this was only an established practice in one of the schools (4).

### **Spreading of practices between treatment and control schools: experimental contamination or institutionalisation?**

Almost half of the case study schools provided evidence of ways in which classroom or teacher development activities promoted through the treatment were being actively spread beyond the treatment schools, by education officers, head teachers and teachers.

Whilst this represents a 'success story' for institutionalization, it is also 'contamination' in the sense of a QE study:

- In school 1 (primary control) the teacher reported '*her daughter's school follows EIA (treatment) techniques and she has adapted many of those in her own class*'. The Head Teacher (HT) was aware of EIA (treatment) and wanted

training in 'how to teach students English, using English conversation'; the HT encouraged teachers to speak English and allow students to practice English. The Education Officer (EO) liked the use of teacher peer-support, supplementary classroom materials and pair and group work in EIA (treatment) and was actively promoting these throughout all their schools.

- In school 2 (primary control) both teachers reported taking part in the new Subject-Based Training and sharing what they had learned across the school. This government programme has aspects of the treatment institutionalized within it.
- In school 1 and 3, the EO said they actively promoted EIA (treatment) approaches to all schools (including control schools).

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## Summary

In primary schools, teachers experienced *support* through a variety of mechanisms. In secondary schools, such support was rare, only evidenced in a treatment school (7). Activities and resources provided through the treatment (EIA) were used regularly in schools, both individually and collaboratively. The role of head-teachers (and to some extent, education officers) was important both in terms of fostering a collaborative, developmental environment, and in focussing upon learning and teaching. Schools where such support was established tentatively seem to be associated with higher scores in the QE study.

## References

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“English in Action (EIA) is a UK Government funded programme implemented by the Government of Bangladesh and managed by Cambridge Education, a member of Mott MacDonald.”

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